

The University of Connecticut Chapter of

AAUP

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Testimony to Finance Committee on NextGeneration CT Senate Bill 840

Honorable Chairs and Members of the Committee:

My name is Carol Polifroni. I am a faculty member at the University of Connecticut, School of Nursing where I have served for more than 35 years in a variety of roles from faculty to administration to faculty, and today I am here as president of the UCONN AAUP representing all the faculty and research professionals of the University's schools and departments.

Our chapter has served the faculty for over seventy years, and we have proudly worked with numerous university presidents, successive boards of trustees, Governors of Connecticut, many of you and your predecessors.

Through the bold leadership of Governor Malloy and President Susan Herbst, I am here today to discuss NextGeneration CT. The AAUP endorses a workable budget, a reasonable tuition and a tuition assistance plan that keeps UCONN within reach of all Connecticut residents. We endorse a faculty to student ratio that facilitates the development of the minds and personhood of the students we serve through participative and dynamic pedagogy. We embrace a research-oriented university that stands for innovation, discovery for application and cutting edge invention. We also conceptually endorse the proposed Next Generation STEM initiative, just as we earlier supported the UCONN 2000 and 21st Century plans. AAUP can attest to the results of a changed university manifest in so many ways.

Connecticut can point to a long history of innovation and invention in the mechanical age, and as we transition to the information age the University of Connecticut is now poised to be the partner with so many innovative businesses in the state, and through research and patent potential, to be the agent for technological change.

Thanks to earlier legislative commitments and vision, the University of Connecticut we see today hums with ideas and innovation, its graduates fill the ranks of citizens in every community in the state. It is a vastly different university than it was a mere ten years ago; all for the better. AAUP members are building a University that has and will continue to create a brain *draw* to the state rather than a brain drain. We intend to continue making meaningful progress toward positioning UConn among the great universities in the United States and attracting talented individuals who

wish to learn, teach, and discover in a top-tier intellectual community; UConn the flagship university for the state.

With the NextGeneration CT initiative we are ready to create a 21st century contribution to economic development which will place UCONN in the position of job creation through construction, facilitation of ideas, and the new versions of information exchange. Information is changing hands at the speed of electricity, and industries with the good jobs are taking advantage of it.... Whether computer based, medical information exchange in real time across the state or the continent, computer designed manufacturing and so much more.

Technology will be the driver of new jobs; we in Connecticut have a choice...to be in the center of this job creation or on the sidelines. UConn and AAUP choose to be at the center and will do so with your assistance.

Ideas and education are needed to enhance our product...our students... competitiveness in today's and tomorrow's marketplace; education in STEM areas as well as specialty education in agriculture, the humanities, the liberal arts, business, fine arts, law, pharmacy, social work and nursing. The requested \$1.5 billion dollars can be committed to a strategic vision unlike the prior investments, which were needed to make up for years of deferred funding and maintenance. NextGeneration CT is a commitment to the advancement of STEM teaching, research and service and facilitating the University's ability to reach its vision to be a Top Tier Public University. It is also a commitment to continued excellence for all our students through relocation of the Hartford Campus to downtown for an urban campus experience and expansion of the Stamford campus particularly in the areas of business and digital media. Unlike prior funding initiatives, this one has operating funds within it for new faculty positions in STEM and other areas to meet the general education needs of our students. AAUP speaks for the *balance* needed between a focus on jobs and a focus on education for the values that the latter brings to the individual and society. Our students receive a liberally acquired education that enhances their competitiveness in the marketplace through development of skills, knowledge and ability in critical thinking, communication, appreciation of global connectedness and utilization of informatics and technology.

STEM is about the physical sciences and AAUP knows that the physical sciences are the interstices for all education whether it is in the sciences, the arts or the humanities. Some of you remember the spirographs you used as a child to create wonderful colorfully detailed pictures with a hand run toy and now one can create a similar art on a computer. We've all wondered why we cannot read our health care providers' writing, and digitalizing that will make consumer education so much more effective. We know the provision of music to an unborn child enhances language development skills as a youngster, and this requires technology. Our state has many veterans as its members and enhancement of their required prosthetic devices will make their quality of life so improved and this requires science, technology, engineering and math. UConn cannot admit more nursing or allied health students to meet the ever growing needs for health and medical care to our aging population without more and better biology labs. As our seas rise, we need to know how to best plan and manage that fact with the science of tomorrow. Whether your son, daughter, neighbor or perhaps you are interested in health care, music, the arts, and or the humanities, their lives will intersect with physical science.

Thus, it is not about whether NextGeneration CT can be afforded at this time. All indicators suggest that as a state, we cannot afford to miss this opportunity for investment in securing a bright future based on education and research to meet the ever growing needs of our citizens and society.

AAUP Officers and faculty members will provide testimony on specific aspects of NextGeneration CT. VP Faquir Jain will speak on his research in STEM with a focus on diabetes and how that impacts people's health. Treasurer Larry Renfro will address biology infrastructure and faculty member Rajeev Bansal will address the work of members of his department in health, defense and our oceans.

I am pleased to respond to questions or provide further information.

Thank you.

E. Carol Polifroni, Professor

President of UCONN AAUP